



COVID-19 UPDATE for the Tertiary Education Sector

TEU Advisory

4 May 2022

As Aotearoa moves to more relaxed COVID-19 settings with a return to some elements of 'normality' in our lives, it is timely to update our advisory, but also to remind all that good health and safety practice and behaviours remain the foundation of workplace requirements.

Traffic light framework:

The country is now in the "Orange" setting of the Covid Protection Framework (traffic light system). In our sector, this means:

- **At Orange:**
 - no limits on numbers indoor or outdoor gatherings;
 - no requirement to scan or display QR codes.
 - Masks and social distancing are still strongly advised indoors (especially in teaching spaces, libraries etc).
- **At Green:**
 - no restrictions;
 - encouraged to continue good health practices;
 - no requirement to scan or display QR codes.

Mandates:

Worker Vaccine Mandates have been lifted in Education, Defence and Police, but remain in place for Health & Disability (including Aged Care), Corrections, Border and MIQ workers.

- For our members who work in Health-related fields and that are already covered by the Public Health Order, those requirements will remain in place for the foreseeable future.

Vaccination policies:

Many individual employers have now relaxed their vaccination requirements and, in some institutions, their mask wearing requirements. However, it is still essential that your Health & Safety Reps, Branch President(s) and Organiser(s) are consulted and involved in changes to COVID-19 policy settings at individual institutions. Employers should be allowing adequate time for this consultation process and be open, communicative and transparent throughout.

It's a great time to join the TEU

teu@teu.ac.nz | 04 801 5098 | 178 Willis St, Te Aro, Wellington 6011

Masks:

As the Omicron variant of COVID-19 is still extremely common in our communities we strongly advocate for, and urge you all to, continue wearing masks in indoor spaces – especially in the workplace.

COVID Leave:

We continue to monitor any issues that may arise around the use of sick leave, particularly for when family members may have COVID-19, or when isolating due to being a household contact. For clarity, it is our expectation that if you are sick with COVID-19 or caring for a family member who is sick with COVID-19 then you should be taking a form of pandemic or special leave, NOT using sick leave. Do not go to work if you feel unwell.

Risk Assessments:

There have been some changes to Worksafe NZ's Risk Assessment Tool in light of the Government's recent announcements. The key questions asked in that risk assessment are:

- *Is there a greater risk of the worker being exposed to new variants at work than they would be in the community?*
- *Does the worker regularly, as part of their work, interact with people who are at greater risk of severe illness should they contract COVID-19?*
- *Does the worker regularly interact with people who are less likely to be vaccinated against COVID-19?*
- *Does the worker work in a confined indoor space (of less than 100m²) and involve close and sustained interactions with others (i.e. closer than 1m distance, for periods of more than 15 continuous minutes)?*

These are the questions your employer should be asking when making health and safety decisions as students and staff return to campuses around the country.

The practice of enabling staff to have some autonomy over their presence on campus will be important to managing wellbeing and anxiety levels as many staff continue to manage theirs' and their family's health situation, schools and spousal work arrangements.

Workloads:

Workload concerns remain very high so your managers must be having regular workload conversations that include your own 'usual' workload, any additional workload if covering for absent colleagues, and managing a reduced workload as staff return to work following a period away due to COVID-19.

Good, collaborative planning is critical to the ongoing welfare of the people in the tertiary education sector – the staff and learners. For these to be effective and useful, staff should be involved in all decision making as they understand the nuances of programmes and student requirements.

For further information on COVID-19 related employment issues please contact your local organiser or e-mail us at teu@teu.ac.nz.